



88069934

CHALLIS



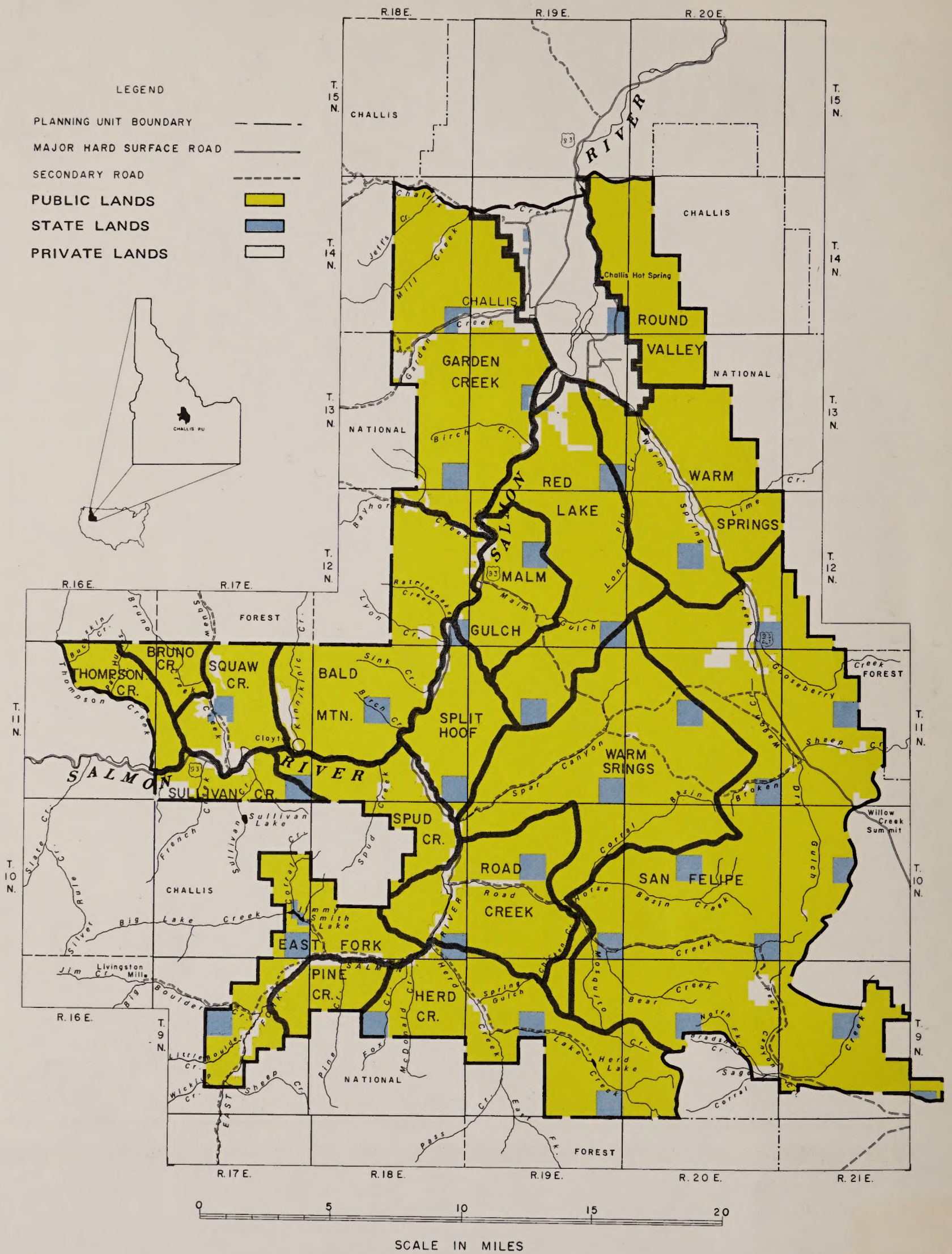
RANGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

SUMMARY REPORT

SF
85.35
.12
C49
1979

U.S. Department of the Interior — Bureau of Land Management
Salmon District — Idaho

March 1979



ALLOTMENT BOUNDARIES AND LAND OWNERSHIP STATUS OF THE CHALLIS UNIT

BLM Library
D-553A, Building 50
Denver Federal Center
P. O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225-0047

SF
85.35
.I2
C49
1979

RANGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Challis Planning Unit

Salmon District

ABSTRACT

The Range Management Program proposed in this report for the Challis Planning Unit is a result of the recently completed land-use plan, the environmental statement (ES), socio-economic analysis, and identified public concerns.

In this decision, major consideration was given to developing the productive potential of the vegetation, reducing or mitigating environmental impacts, producing forage on a sustained yield basis to support a viable local economy, and improving bighorn sheep and aquatic habitat.

No single action or alternative proposed in the ES was responsive to these factors, so a balance of the proposed action and Alternative 3 (ES) was used to determine the proposed Range Management Program.

The major decision in the proposed program involves the amount of livestock use individual ranchers will be authorized. Historically, the original qualified use of the area was 21,900 AUMs while the average use over the last several years has been 17,444 AUMs. The proposed action, based on environmental and other considerations in the ES, identifies 10,436 available livestock AUMs plus 161 horses while Alternative 3 suggests 12,465 available AUMs with 91 horses. The BLM's proposed Range Management Program recommends 12,120 AUMs and 150 horses over the initial three-year period.

During the initial three-year period, and also in subsequent years, intensive range management work will be initiated.

Non-native species (alfalfa, fourwing saltbush, crested wheatgrass, etc.) will be used in the reseeding of the 23,000 to 29,000 acres of the unit. The use of the non-native species instead of the originally planned native species will yield four to five times more AUMs, thus benefiting wildlife and wild horses as well as livestock.

Other range improvement programs are also planned. These would include brush treatments, fencing, and water development.

In implementing this program, the proposed decisions are to be issued to individual operators by July 31, 1979, to be effective March 1, 1980, with the grazing program to be fully implemented by September 30, 1984.

The plan proposes the use of the Experimental Stewardship Program under the Federal Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978. A group that is representative of the interests in the region has been established to give advice, make recommendations, coordinate individual allotments programs, recommend priorities, and evaluate progress under this plan. This innovative approach to improved land management is supported by the Governor and the Idaho Congressional Delegation.

Library
D-355A, Building 30
Denver Federal Center
P. O. Box 25047
Denver, CO 80225-0047

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MAP	Inside Front Cover
ABSTRACT	Page 1
INTRODUCTION	Page 3
THE PROGRAM	Page 4
ALTERNATIVES IN THE ES	Page 8
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT	Page 10
IMPLEMENTATION	Page 11

INTRODUCTION

Livestock grazing started in the Challis Planning Unit concurrently with the start of extraction of various mineral resources in the 1860's. In the early days beef animals were the dominant grazers with sheep being introduced into the area in the early 1900's. Feral horses and burros have been a part of the grazing picture since the early mining days. A variety of wildlife species depend upon the forage resources of the area. Thus, for the past 80 or more years, the Challis area forage resource has been subjected to the grazing pressures of domestic, feral, and wild animals. The total grazing demand has exceeded the forage production capabilities under current management efforts. The Bureau of Land Management is working to correct this imbalance through land-use planning and environmental assessment of the planning decision. This document summarizes the results of these efforts.

Some people in the Challis area believe that there has been considerable improvement in range condition since the drought years of the 1930's. However, BLM records dating back to the early 1960's indicate that there has been no significant improvement in the last 15–20 years. This indicates a static condition as far as trends are concerned. Inventories conducted in 1977 show that the area is producing significantly less usable forage than it is capable of producing.

There are 38 holders of BLM grazing permits in the area who, during the last eight years, have averaged a total of 17,444 AUMs of grazing use. Their total qualified use is 21,900 AUMs, but for various reasons an average of 4,450 AUMs (20%) have not been utilized. Of the 38 operators almost half (16) have fewer than 100 head of cattle. Seventeen operators (45%) have herd sizes between 100 and 300 head. Five operators run more than 300 head. So, 87% of the operators run less than 300 head, a marginal situation for family operations in today's economy.

In 1977 there was approximately \$192,000 in livestock income generated by operators in the ES area. This was 35% of farm-related personal income for Custer County.

The Challis area presents many management challenges. For example:

- Vegetation production is limited due to a short growing season and to distribution of

effective moisture preceding and during the early part of the growing season.

- In areas where most of the domestic livestock grazing occurs, annual precipitation ranges from about 7–16 inches with an average of about 12 inches.

- Some of the unit has water of high quality. However, water quality in most of the unit is altered by the influx and deposition of silt. This siltation situation arises because the area is subjected to frequent high intensity, short duration, cloudburst-type rainstorms in the summer months.

- Currently, domestic livestock in the Challis Unit graze the Federal lands primarily in the spring and early summer, with some later summer and fall use. Usually, each range is grazed at the same time and in the same manner each year.

- In 1971, at the time of passage of legislation protecting the wild horses and burros, there were about 150 head of wild horses in the area. In 1978, prior to foaling, 586 were counted. Forage needs to support this number of horses equals 8,790 AUMs. Essentially, food preferences of horses duplicate the spring to summer preferences of cattle.

The factors of vegetation production capability, precipitation amounts and pattern, cloudburst frequency, livestock grazing use patterns and wild horse numbers for the most part determine the condition of the range. Range condition refers to the relative health or production of a range in relation to its vegetation potential. Overall, vegetation within the Challis Unit is in fair to poor condition.

Trends of range condition vary in the unit. The majority of the unit is in fair condition with a static trend. A portion is in poor condition with deterioration continuing and only about 13,000 acres show improvement. In general, the lower elevation areas near water are in the poorest condition, while higher elevation areas away from water are in fair to good condition. Domestic livestock make less use of steep slopes and some ridgetops that are not close to water. Wild horses and game animals, however, graze these areas.

Major big game animals found in the Challis Planning Unit are deer, elk, antelope, and bighorn

sheep. Other game species include blue grouse, sage grouse and chukar partridge. In total, 291 terrestrial wildlife species have been identified in the unit (72 mammals, 204 birds, and 15 amphibian and reptile species).

Ten streams within the area serve as spawning and/or rearing areas for either steelhead trout or chinook salmon. Sockeye salmon migrate through the unit to spawning areas in the headwaters of the Salmon River drainage. Resident fish species include rainbow, cutthroat, Dolly Varden, brook trout, and whitefish. Major problems pertinent to sustaining fish populations, particularly the anadromous species, are dewatering of streams (resulting in direct fish loss through unscreened diversions) and siltation of streams.

Endangered species found in the area are classified as sensitive: river otter, long-billed curlew, bobcat, Canada lynx, osprey and pigeon hawk. There appears to be few interrelationships between these wildlife species and livestock grazing.

THE PROGRAM

What It Is

With the completion of land use planning and the environmental statement, the BLM is now formulating the decisions necessary to implement a management program for the Challis Planning Unit. The contents here are general in nature and include elements that establish management guidelines for the entire unit. Decisions applicable to each allotment such as livestock use levels, establishment of allotment by allotment grazing capacities, specific range improvements, applicable wildlife and wild horse reservations, etc., will be outlined by specific decision. Specific range improvement or rehabilitation projects proposed in connection with allotment management plan implementation will be designed to yield multiple resource benefits and will be evaluated with respect to environmental impacts (Environmental Assessment Report); if significant impacts cannot be adequately mitigated, the proposal will be discarded. The development of allotment management plans will be consistent with the guidelines described herein.

The selection of a course of action for the Challis Unit required an integration of five considerations: the environmental impacts analyzed

in the ES, socio-economic impacts, various resource needs, the issues identified during the public review period and the desired management goals and objectives from land use planning for the Challis Unit. As a result of considering all of these factors, the primary objectives of future management and other actions proposed for the unit are: (1) develop the productive potential of the vegetal cover for yielding multiple use benefits, (2) reduce or mitigate impacts that adversely affect the environment to the fullest extent practicable, (3) produce forage on a sustained yield basis adequate to support a viable local economy, and (4) attempt to meet the special public concerns regarding bighorn sheep habitat, aquatic habitat, sediment yield, and wild horse use. Since no one Alternative nor the Proposed Action considered in the ES is completely responsive to all these factors, a balance of recommendations from each of them was sought. However, the Proposed Action and Alternative 3 were primarily used.

Major actions and decisions required to accomplish the above objectives are as follows:

General

Initiate a program of cooperation and coordination with other Federal and State resource management agencies as provided under the Experimental Stewardship Program in the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978.

Wild Horses

1. Furnish year-long forage for 150 head of wild horses in the Red Lake, Road Creek, San Felipe/Peck Canyon, Warm Springs and Split Hoof Allotments (2,250 AUMs). This will provide numbers that are adequate to maintain a healthy, vigorous herd and of a size that is large enough to provide easy public viewing.
2. Gathering of excess numbers will commence in late summer or early fall of 1979, at a time when injury to foals will be minimal.

Wildlife

1. Improve all wildlife habitat conditions and furnish at least 7,800 AUMs of forage for big game species in the Challis Unit as follows:

320 elk during the winter and spring
5,260 mule deer during the winter and spring
1,160 antelope in the winter and 910 antelope in the spring, summer and fall
220 bighorn sheep during the winter and spring

2. Exclude livestock grazing from 5,790 acres of critical bighorn sheep winter range in the East Fork area. Retire grazing privileges attached to ranches sold to subdividers.
3. Place high priority on improving aquatic and riparian habitat. Accomplish the following:
 - Implement livestock management systems designed to improve riparian habitat.
 - Develop a coordinated aquatic and riparian improvement program on all lands in the drainage irrespective of ownership through the Experimental Stewardship Program.
 - Substantially exclude livestock use on the 17.5 miles of stream on the Main Salmon and East Fork of the Salmon Rivers bordering public lands.
 - Improve anadromous fish spawning beds by excluding livestock use from 3.25 miles of Herd Creek, one half mile of Lake Fork Creek, and one quarter mile of Squaw Creek. These exclosures, in addition to protecting riparian habitat, will provide an opportunity to compare the effectiveness of livestock management systems with total livestock exclusion.
 - Improve aquatic habitat on Road Creek by retirement of grazing privileges attached to ranches sold to subdividers, by fencing and excluding livestock from 1.5 miles of key riparian habitat, and by reducing streambank usage in the upper portion of the drainage by improved livestock management.
 - Delay spring turnout to the fullest extent practicable to reduce livestock use of riparian areas.
 - Closely monitor improvement of riparian habitat and make periodic management changes or provide additional protection to the extent needed to make reasonable progress.

Watershed

1. As a general goal, an average of 50 percent of all forage production (by weight) on suitable range will be reserved for plant maintenance, soil protection and stabilization and nonconsumptive habitat. All unpalatable vegetation would also serve to protect the soil resource and provide wildlife habitat cover.
2. For protection of the highly erodible soils in the Malm Gulch Allotment (9,136 acres) and Sand Hollow watershed (3,905 acres), all vegetation will be protected from livestock and wild horse grazing.

Livestock

Table A compares existing qualified use with present use (8-year average). Also shown is a comparison of recommended AUMs for the Proposed Action and Alternative 3 (minimum constraints on livestock grazing).

1. This decision implements portions of the Proposed Action and Alternative 3 of the Challis Supplemental Environmental Statement which will adjust livestock grazing from the 8-year average of 17,444 AUMs to 12,120 AUMs for an average adjustment from active use of 31%. Planned livestock use for each allotment during the initial period is shown in Table B.
2. Implement intensive grazing management (rest-rotation/deferred rotation) on approximately 240,000 acres. On approximately 70,000 acres allotments will be managed on a seasonal use basis.

TABLE A
LIVESTOCK USE LEVELS IN IMPACT STATEMENT

Allotment	Qualified Use (AUMs)	Present Use 8—Year Average (AUMs)	Proposed Action (AUMs)	Alternative 3 Minimum Constraints on Livestock (AUMs)
Red Lake	1,667	1,062	613	838
Herd Creek	1,411	1,188	1,411	1,411
Road Creek	631	548	346	580
Bruno Creek	134	127	85	130
Round Valley	701	363	438	469
San Felipe/Peck Canyon	8,375	7,393	3,484	3,788
Warm Springs	4,295	3,507	2,201	2,738
Garden Creek	1,673	876	600	768
Bald Mountain	980	614	296	425
Thompson Creek	171	126	51	124
Split Hoof	282	204	118	201
Squaw Creek	524	444	133	199
Spud Creek	265	240	202	236
Pine Creek	181	179	181	181
East Fork	503	492	192	254
Sullivan Creek	107	81	85	123
TOTAL	21,900	17,444	10,436	12,465

TABLE B

PLANNED LIVESTOCK USE
DURING THE INITIAL PERIOD

<u>Allotment</u>	<u>Permitted Use (AUMs)</u>
Red Lake	838
Herd Creek	1,411
Road Creek	346
Bruno Creek	130
Round Valley	469
San Felipe/Peck Canyon	3,788
Warm Springs	2,738
Garden Creek	768
Bald Mountain	425
Thompson Creek	51
Split Hoof	201
Squaw Creek	199
Spud Creek	236
Pine Creek	181
East Fork	254
Sullivan Creek	85
TOTAL	12,120

What It Will Do

Under this decision approximately 40,000 acres will significantly improve in condition. There will be a 120 percent increase in the acreage in good condition. There will be an increase of 400 percent in the acreage with an upward trend and the acreage in a downward trend will be reduced by nearly 98 percent.

Livestock grazing will be withheld from 74 percent of the miles of stream passing through public lands in the unit that are of value for anadromous fish and are in fair condition. A substantial reduction in livestock grazing will be applied on another 16 percent of the riparian habitat that is also in fair condition. In addition, management improvements will also be applied on riparian habitat currently in good or excellent condition.

As a result of improved management and livestock reductions on riparian habitat, sediment yield will be reduced from an estimated 1.32 tons/acres to .87 tons/acres or a reduction of about one-third per year.

Competition between livestock and bighorn sheep for forage on the East Fork range will be substantially eliminated by closure of 5,790

acres to livestock and the retirement of grazing privileges attached to ranches that are sold to subdividers.

Wild horse numbers will be maintained at a level that will maintain a healthy, viable herd with a large enough population to make viewing by the public relatively easy.

Forage allocations for the Herd Creek, Sullivan Creek, Pine Creek, Road Creek and Thompson Creek Allotments are based on the Proposed Action and the land use planning multiple use recommendations. Forage allocations in other allotments were derived from Alternative 3 (minimum constraints on livestock grazing). Livestock allocations in the five allotments named are to be maintained at the levels outlined in the Proposed Action because of serious conflicts with other resources.

For the other allotments it is considered that some livestock use in addition to that suggested by the Proposed Action could be allowed without jeopardizing attainment of environmental objectives. This increase in use would come from better seedings and additional range improvements.

The Proposed Action lists 50 water sources, 45 miles of pipeline and 30 water troughs. An additional 30 water sources, 20 miles of pipeline and 30 water troughs have been identified in those allotments where Alternative 3 is being implemented. (Note: some of these water sources are on National Forest land and use of them is to be coordinated under the Stewardship Program.)

The results of this range improvement work plus other additional AUMs from improved seeding methods (see below) will more than offset the disparity in AUMs available at the end of the program period where Alternative 3 is being used instead of the Proposed Action.

For a comparison of the Range Management Program for the Challis Unit with the Proposed Action and Alternative 3 recommendations refer to Table C below.

In each of the three actions the increase in AUMs over the fifteen-year period is calculated on the cumulative effect of all the management improvement practices contained in the plan including range reseeding, brush control, fencing, water development and establishing grazing systems.

The AUM increases due to reseeding in the proposed ES action and the ES Alternative 3 are based on projected forage yields using native plants. It is estimated, however, that as much as 2400 to 3400 additional AUMs can be realized in this program by utilizing non-native species such as alfalfa, fourwing saltbrush and crested wheatgrass.

Vegetation manipulation would not only include limited plowing and seeding as originally planned but also a large amount would involve brush control by burning and interseeding with more productive species. It is now felt that brush treatment by beating would not be beneficial because of the lack of an understory of desirable species and the number of brush seedlings that would escape the beaters.

An environmental assessment report will be completed by a multidisciplinary team which will study the impacts on the environment of each project before installation of any range improvement treatment or structure.

Public input throughout the planning and environmental statement process favored socio-economic considerations and the maximum grazing use possible. This decision favors these same objectives but to the extent of the attainment of the environmental goals identified in the ES.

TABLE C (Adapted from Table 8-68, page 8-125, Final Challis Supplemental Environmental Statement)

Comparison of Planned Management Decision With Proposed Action and Alternative 3			
Component	ES Proposed Action	This Decision	ES Alternative 3
Wild Horses	162	150	91
AUMs at end of initial 3-year period (without seedings)	10,436	12,120	12,456
Forage available to livestock after 15 years (AUMs)	17,369	16,000	15,172
Plus projected accrual of AUMs by improved seedings	18,400 to 19,400		

ALTERNATIVES IN THE ES

In addition to the proposed action, the ES addressed the following six alternatives:

1. Continuation of Present Grazing Program
2. Elimination of Livestock and Wild Horse Grazing
3. Minimum Constraints on Livestock Grazing
4. Minimum Constraints on Wildlife
5. Minimum Constraints on Wild Horses
6. Reduced Levels of Grazing of Livestock and Wild Horses.

The following sections briefly describe and evaluate the proposed action and each of the alternatives. (See the final draft of the Supplemental ES for a more complete analysis.) The objectives (management emphasis) of each alternative vary somewhat from the original proposal and from the other alternatives. For purposes of comparison, impacts in all cases are those which would occur by 1994 (15 years after full implementation of the proposed action).

Environmental Statement Proposed Action

The proposed action considered supplying 3,722 cattle with 10,436 AUMs of primarily spring grazing in the Challis Unit. It included range improvements and vegetation manipulations of 57.3 miles of fence, 51 spring developments, 44.5 miles of water pipeline, 31 troughs, and 23,385 acres of vegetation manipulation. It also proposed to furnish year-long forage for an average number of 162 wild horses in the Red Lake, Road Creek, San Felipe/Pack Canyon, Warm Springs and Split Hoof Allotments (2,430 AUMs).

The balance of the elements of the proposed action is the same as the range management decision described under "The Program" part of this document.

Implementation of this alternative would provide good progress for development of the productive potential for multiple uses and for reducing impacts that are adversely affecting the environment. The 40% reductions in livestock use would have a serious adverse impact on the local economy.

Alternative 1

Continuation of Present Grazing Program

This alternative assumes that licensed use is at the level of the eight-year average (17,444 AUMs) with present allotment boundaries and class of livestock. No new range improvements or vegetation manipulation would be implemented. However, existing range improvements would continue to be maintained in a usable condition.

The wild horse numbers would be controlled to maintain an average of 586 horses, the estimated number now occurring in the area. Excess numbers would be gathered approximately every year.

Since the number of wildlife are not under the control of BLM, it is expected they will fluctuate according to population dynamics and habitat condition.

This alternative was eliminated as it failed to meet the primary management objectives of developing full productive potential and failed to meet the environmental protection needs and maintain a viable livestock economy. It also foretold of steadily decreasing annual net income to the livestock economy because of the continuing deterioration of the Federal range.

Alternative 2

Elimination of Livestock and Wild Horse Grazing

Under this alternative all livestock and wild horses would be removed from BLM-administered public lands of the Challis area. The portion of the Herd Creek AMP on BLM-administered land would be terminated. Domestic livestock trailing permits would be issued as necessary to allow livestock movement to or from National Forest, private and State owned lands. State and private lands intermingled with public land would have to be fenced to keep livestock from trespassing on Federal property. This would be the responsibility of the individual landowners. Increased range supervision by BLM would be necessary to assure that operators adhere to conditions of trailing permits and that trespass would not occur.

No range improvements would be maintained or constructed unless necessary for other programs such as the wildlife program. Any range improvements, i.e., fences, which conflict with

wildlife movement would be removed. There would be a continuation of other management functions in the area, guided by the management framework plan, i.e., those for timber, wildlife, minerals and recreation.

This alternative was eliminated from serious consideration as it fails to meet the primary management objectives.

Alternative 3

Minimum Constraints on Livestock Grazing

This alternative maximizes livestock grazing within the forage resource capability and policy constraints. Initial livestock forage availability for this alternative is 12,456 AUMs. Range improvements and vegetation manipulations required to implement this alternative are 58 miles of fence, 51 spring developments, 44.5 miles of water pipeline, 31 troughs, and 29,485 acres of vegetation manipulation.

Wild horse numbers would be controlled at an average level of 91 head. They would fluctuate between 75 and 114. A gathering program would be required every two years in order to maintain the herd at the average level.

This alternative tried to achieve the objectives of development of the productive potential of the resource but failed in only providing 784 AUMs increase on vegetative manipulations on 29,485 acres.

Alternative 4

Minimum Constraints on Wildlife

This alternative maximizes the wildlife resource within resource capability and policy constraints as developed in Step 1 of the MFP. The initial stocking level for this alternative is 9,202 AUMs of livestock forage. Range improvements and vegetation manipulation required to implement this alternative are 92 miles of fence, 50 spring developments, 44.5 miles of water pipelines, 31 water troughs, and 23,395 acres of vegetation manipulation.

Wild horse numbers would be controlled at an average level of 141 head. They would fluctuate between 100 and 176. A gathering program would be required every three years in order to maintain the herd at the average level.

Livestock and wild horse use would be eliminated in the Horse Basin and Corral Basin watersheds (20,352 acres) for the benefit of the ana-

dromous fish habitat in the Road Creek drainage. A total of 24.9 miles of streams (3.8 miles along Herd Creek; 4 miles along Lake Creek; and 17.1 miles along Road Creek, including tributaries of Mosquito and Bear Creek) would be fenced to protect the anadromous and resident fish habitat. Turnout dates for livestock would be no earlier than June 15. Livestock grazing would be eliminated in the bighorn sheep winter ranges (15,998 acres) in the East Fork Allotment. No livestock water would be developed in 2,291 acres of elk crucial winter range in the San Felipe/Peck Canyon Allotment.

This alternative was eliminated because it failed to meet the primary management objectives of developing the full productive potential of the area and maintaining a viable local economy.

Alternative 5

Minimum Constraints on Wild Horses

This alternative maximizes the wild horse resource within resource capability and policy constraints as developed in Step 1 of the MFP. The initial stocking levels for this alternative are 10,100 AUMs of livestock forage. Range improvements and vegetation manipulation required to implement this alternative are 33 miles of fence, 40 spring developments, 44 miles of water pipeline, 31 water troughs, and 23,385 acres of vegetation manipulation.

Wild horse numbers would be controlled at an average level of 340 head. They would fluctuate between 200 and 425. A gathering program would be required every four years in order to maintain the herd at the average level.

This alternative was eliminated from consideration because of failure to meet primary management objectives and lack of public support.

Alternative 6

Reduced Level of Grazing of Livestock and Wild Horses

This alternative represents a different possible multiple use mix option as developed in the Step 2 MFP process. The initial stocking level for this alternative is 7,128 AUMs of livestock forage. Range improvements and manipulation required to implement this alternative are 54 miles of fence, 51 spring developments, 44.5 miles of

water pipeline, 31 troughs and 23,385 acres of vegetation manipulation.

The wild horse herd would be controlled at an average level of 80 head. They would fluctuate between 75 and 100. A gathering program would be required every year in order to maintain the herd at the average level.

A total of 24.9 miles of stream would be fenced to protect anadromous fish habitat. These are the same streams that would be fenced under the minimum constraint in the wildlife alternative. As under the wildlife alternative, livestock grazing would be eliminated from the crucial bighorn sheep winter ranges and from the elk crucial winter range in the San Felipe/Peck Canyon Allotment.

This alternative was eliminated because it failed to meet the primary management objectives and lack of public support.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This section briefly summarizes some of the past and ongoing public involvement during the planning, environmental assessment, and implementation phases of the grazing program described earlier in this document.

Planning

During the period August 1, 1973 to November 7, 1973, 22 meetings were held on the Challis MFP in the Challis and Salmon areas. During the same period inquiry sheets and brochures were sent out on which the public commented. In addition, individual letters were received from members of the public. During the period November, 1973 to January, 1974, additional comments were received on Step 2 MFP.

Draft ES

July 2, 1975 — Preliminary discussions on the Challis ES at Range Users meeting in Challis.

August 11, 1975 — Team assembled in Challis to prepare Draft.

August 12, 1975 through February 24, 1976 — Newspaper articles and letters requesting input to the Draft ES. During this same period twelve (12) meetings were held to discuss the ES and encourage input.

June 3, 1976 — National News Release from the Department of Interior announcing availability of Draft ES.

June 7, 1976 — Draft ES issued.

June 15, 1976 — Notice of availability of Draft ES published in the Federal Register.

July 13, 1976 — Public hearing on Draft ES held at Challis, Idaho.

July 15, 1976 — Public hearing on Draft ES held at Boise, Idaho.

July 30, 1976 — End of 45-day Public Review Period.

Final ES

January, 1977 — Final Challis Environmental Statement was released and judged to be inadequate because of the level of soil and vegetation data.

Planning

June 6–9, 1978 — Resource workshop involving wild horse interest, wildlife, livestock, mining, community economic stability, and environment to acquire input in the development of land use planning recommendations and the proposed action.

Supplemental Draft ES

June 19, 1978 — Challis Supplemental ES team assembled in Boise, Idaho.

August 16, 1978 — Federal Register notice.

August 17, 1978 — Draft Supplemental ES was issued.

August 17–24, 1978 — News Release — State and national on availability and contents of Supplemental Statement.

September 6–7, 1978 — Public hearings in Challis and Boise, Idaho.

October 2, 1978 — End of 45-day Public Review Period.

Final Supplemental ES

November 30, 1978 — Final Challis Supplemental Environmental Statement released.

Experimental Stewardship Program

January 9, 1979 — Meeting with Idaho Rangeland

Committee to develop recommendations for the formulation of an experimental stewardship program for the Challis area.

It was recommended that the Idaho Rangeland Committee would serve in a facilitating capacity for the establishment and functioning of a local (Challis) stewardship steering group which would be responsible for assisting in the development of coordinating programs for an individual allotment basis. The local steering group would be responsible for recommending priorities and assigning planning teams to each allotment in the unit with the operators working with the team.

The local steering group is proposed to be made up of representatives of:

- Soil Conservation Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- Idaho Department of Fish & Game
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Custer County Economic Stabilization Committee
- Wild Horse Spokesman
- Extension Agent
- University of Idaho
- Rangeland Committee
- Soil Conservation Districts
- Wildlife Federation
- 4 Ranchers.

It is clearly understood that the steering group will serve in an advisory capacity and the Bureau retains full authority and responsibility for making the needed decisions.

The District Manager's land use decisions under the Bureau planning system and this document will identify the parameters that the local steering group will work within. Recommendations from the planning team to the local steering group are to be presented to the Salmon District Grazing Board for recommendations and input to the Bureau site specific decisions on AMPs in the Challis ES area.

Public Contact

Day-to-day contact with users and interest groups will continue as specific features of the range program are implemented.

We will develop and maintain a close work-

ing relationship with the local steering group and the State Rangeland Committee. In addition, we will provide periodic briefings for the Governor's Office, Congressional Offices and statewide conservation and industry organizations to keep them up-to-date on problems and progress.

IMPLEMENTATION

Administrative Actions

Final decisions will be issued to individual operators through the administrative process by July 31, 1979, to be effective at the beginning of the 1980 grazing year (March 1, 1980). The decision will establish for each individual rancher the amount of livestock permitted on public lands, season of use and type of grazing system. The grazing program as outlined is planned to be fully implemented by September 30, 1984.

Any adjustment in grazing use required to protect seedings or vegetative manipulation projects until new seedlings become established will be carried as non-use until the benefits of these improvement projects can be determined. Adjustments in livestock numbers to reach the grazing capacity of the range will be implemented over a three-year period amounting to one-third each year. The difference between a permittee present preference and the proposed stocking rate will be carried as suspended preference.

Experimental Stewardship Program

An experimental stewardship program has been initiated in the unit. A committee composed of representatives from Federal and State agencies, livestock groups, wildlife groups, wild horse interests, and conservation groups has been established to give advice and make recommendations and foster an innovative approach to range rehabilitation and improved livestock management proposals. This program has the support of the Governor, as well as the members of the Idaho Congressional Delegation.

Range Betterment Projects

The following projects will be necessary to implement the grazing program and achieve the goals and objectives of the Challis land use plan: vegetative manipulation projects on 23,000 to 29,000 acres before 1984; 60 miles of fence;

80 spring developments; 65 miles of water pipeline; and 60 water troughs. (Detailed project planning and design will be included in the various AMPs).

Related Actions

The implementation of this program complements or facilitates the following management plans which are in process of being developed:

- Bighorn sheep habitat management plan.
- Anadromous fish and riparian habitat management plan.
- Wild horse area management plan.

Grazing Use Objective

The Challis land use plan emphasizes the need for retiring the grazing preference attached to base properties purchased for recreation subdivision. This is necessary to provide forage and space for wildlife displaced by homes, people and the noise created by human activities where the base property is subdivided. This recommendation will be followed when the grazing allotment is adjacent to the base property being subdivided. Requests to transfer preference from a base to another base will be held in suspense until the impact of the transfer on the surrounding area can be determined.

Wild horses will be managed at an average population level of 150. If monitoring indicates that increases or reductions in forage allocations are appropriate in the wild horse area, adjustments will be made following revisions to the land use plan.

Appropriations

Development of facilities will begin in FY 1979 with \$100,000 of range betterment funds. Funds are available in the 79 FY to carry out the wild horse roundup as planned. Funding availability in the range management program is a critical factor in implementing this program. Appropriations under the Rangeland Improvement Act authorization is imperative. Without that support we will not be able to implement this program as planned.

Monitoring Evaluations and Studies

Each year as grazing systems are implemented, studies pertaining to actual grazing use, vegetative use, vegetative conditions and trend and precipitation will be established. Data on wildlife and other resources will be collected where relevant. Special attention will be given to determining progress in improving riparian habitat. These studies as prescribed in the ES (see pages 1-18) will then be used to monitor and evaluate each grazing system to determine if specific objectives for an area are being met and if changes in management directions are needed.

Environmental assessment records will be completed on range betterment projects to evaluate the impact of these projects on the environment and on other appropriate issues. Cultural resource clearance will also be carried out prior to project construction.

If, in final analysis, wilderness study areas are identified in the Challis area by the BLM wilderness inventory process, some range betterment projects may be delayed, altered or discontinued to meet interim management policy until the suitability for wilderness is designated by Congress.





Idaho State Office
Bureau of Land Management
Federal Building
550 W. Fort Street, Box 042
Boise, Idaho 83724

Salmon District Office
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 430
Salmon, Idaho 83467

